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Provisional summary record of the 34th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 12 July 2004, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Penjo (Vice-President) ..... (Bhutan)

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In the absence of Ms. Rasi, Mr. Penjo, Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (A/59/86-E/2004/69 and A/59/93-E/2004/74)

1. **The President**, after declaring open the humanitarian affairs segment, said that it was the responsibility of Member States to ensure the well-being and protection of their citizens, and the Council's humanitarian affairs segment was an important component of that endeavour. It provided a unique opportunity to reflect on the past year, share ideas and experiences, and identify collective challenges and practical measures to address them. It was therefore essential to reach agreement on a resolution that would guide and support the humanitarian effort during the coming year.

2. **Mr. Egeland** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), introducing the Secretary-General's report entitled "Strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (E/2004/74), noted that it described a year of great changes in the field of humanitarian affairs. In some parts of the world, important strides had been made in addressing the root causes of disasters, and critical progress had been achieved in identifying and prioritizing needs. In others, however, such gains were eclipsed by some of the most dramatic and disturbing developments of modern times: severe floods in Bangladesh and India; the earthquake in Bam, Iran, and the violent displacement of people in Darfur, Sudan. Moreover, the last year would perhaps be remembered most because of attacks against humanitarian colleagues and relief operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan and, in August 2003, Iraq.

3. New actors and methods were forcing a review of current practices; new threats to security were testing the resolve of the humanitarian community, whose impartial role was becoming less clear-cut. Many humanitarian partners were worried as the increased involvement of commercial organizations and military forces in relief activities caused working methods and public perceptions to change. The humanitarian community must therefore remain true to the spirit of General Assembly resolution 46/182 by effectively communicating its impartiality and reinforcing the guiding principles that underpinned its work.

4. Undoubtedly, great strides had been made in improving the models, methods and tools of response. However, the "logistical revolution" demanded a corresponding moral, ethical and political revolution in and among Member States and armed groups. Without the necessary access, security and financial resources, state-of-the-art technology could not be used to full advantage. Further, while it was important to continue to support international response mechanisms, more needed to be done to make use of the capacity that already existed in disaster-prone countries. International response tools were inadequate without corresponding local and national capacity-building. The earthquake in Bam showed the importance of local response: before the arrival of the international search and rescue teams in the first critical hours after the earthquake, the Iranian Red Crescent Society had already mobilized eight local relief teams and nearly all the immediate rescue and evacuation was conducted by local and regional actors.

5. The resources of the humanitarian community had always been limited in comparison to its needs. He was nevertheless concerned that, while overall requirements were similar to those of 2003, many commitments had not yet been met. Only 29 per cent of the total requirements for current consolidated appeals had been received, as compared to 33 per cent at the same time in 2003. He was particularly appalled by low levels of funding for crises in the Central African Republic and Somalia, where need was greatest.

6. He was also disturbed by the limited participation in humanitarian funding. Many countries with growing economies were currently richer than the traditional donors had been when they had begun contributing substantially to humanitarian assistance, but economic success had not been translated into pledges. More resources could be secured if traditional donors, response partners and humanitarian workers were more open to forging broad regional and international partnerships.

7. Internal displacement remained a major cause for concern. In that connection, he had taken to heart an external evaluation that found inter-agency collaboration to be lacking. Accordingly, he had expanded the current unit into an inter-agency internal

displacement division and charged it with improving collaboration. He continued to be deeply troubled by sexual exploitation in conflict situations, although he was encouraged by measures to increase awareness among humanitarian actors. The United Nations now required adherence to the highest standards of behaviour from its own staff and from personnel provided to peacekeeping operations by Member States.

8. Since the previous year's humanitarian affairs segment, efforts had been made to address the gaps in transition planning and funding. Progress had been made in prioritizing needs and towards the establishment of a peer review process to examine bilateral humanitarian donations. The necessary shift towards addressing the root cause of disasters was gaining momentum.

9. The ongoing review of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation, 1994, was an opportunity to increase commitment to disaster reduction and to develop a programme of action to support vulnerable communities. To that end, he looked forward to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, to be held in Kobe, Japan, in January 2005.

10. **Mr. Al-Bader** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed concern that the overall requirements for humanitarian assistance remained constant. Natural disasters and environmental emergencies continued to be a threat to the world's poorest people, inflicting heavy human and economic loss. It was therefore essential to develop national preparedness and response capacities in disaster-prone countries, launching effective strategies to address disaster hazards and vulnerabilities and creating regional early warning systems. He stressed the importance of supporting the efforts of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, thereby ensuring that humanitarian assistance would be provided in accordance with humanitarian principles. The Initiative must in turn promote best practice among donors and facilitate humanitarian coordination. To meet those objectives, the Group of 77 and China reaffirmed the importance of developing a framework to provide country teams with a transparent and consistent way to organize information and to enhance the role of agencies in providing emergency assistance in a timely manner.

11. The Group of 77 and China commended the efforts made in countries emerging from conflict by the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, and it welcomed the joint efforts to support country teams in planning and identifying the main elements of the transition strategy.

12. The plight of internally displaced persons remained dire. Humanitarian staff needed the fullest protection from acts of violence and tragic loss of life. To address such issues, the Group of 77 and China underlined the necessity of improved collaboration among humanitarian agencies through continuous development of an enhanced security policy. National response capacity was important: local personnel, properly trained and equipped, offered the most effective means of rapid initial response. Finally, the Group of 77 and China supported the use of the Guidelines for HIV/AIDS interventions in emergency settings established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on HIV/AIDS in Emergency Settings.

13. **Mr. Berteling** (Observer for the Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey), the stabilization and association process countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), said that coordination must not occur only with, or within, the United Nations. The United Nations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Governments must act together. A small but significant step in that regard would be to include all Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) partners in discussions with United Nations country teams, when appropriate. The European Union welcomed the efforts of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to draw public attention to the situation in Darfur and insisted that the Government of Sudan should grant immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access, that human rights violations should be brought to an end, and that all parties to the conflict should abide by the humanitarian ceasefire agreed in N'Djamena on 8 April 2004.

14. Within the framework of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, donors had committed themselves to improving funding practices. The European Union participated actively in discussions among donors on that subject. Humanitarian funding must be adequate, predictable and timely and should be accompanied by

financing to ensure a smooth transition to reconstruction and development.

15. Acts of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse could constitute a crime against humanity in some circumstances. Rape was increasingly used as a weapon in conflict. Such actions must be tackled, along with sexual abuse by humanitarian workers and members of peacekeeping forces. The European Union welcomed the steps taken within the United Nations system to prevent wrongdoing and called upon the Member States to promote similar standards for their uniformed personnel serving under the United Nations.

16. Improved policies regarding internally displaced persons must translate into better practice. The number of internally displaced persons was a good indicator of the level of humanitarian coordination, as no organization was exclusively responsible for them. The European Union welcomed the leadership shown by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and believed that the collaborative approach to the issue must succeed.

17. Mine action was a prerequisite for the safe delivery of humanitarian aid and long-term development. A coordinated programme should be made part of the overall humanitarian operation, in line with the needs defined in the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), and all actors in that field should be encouraged to coordinate their efforts under the guidance of the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

18. The European Union wished to emphasize its support for the work of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) secretariat, for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction to be held in Kobe and for the Conference's planned focus on capacity building, contingency planning, preparedness and ownership because that was the best way to reduce damage from disasters. That was particularly true of the harm caused by climate change, since extreme weather events would become more frequent. Disaster reduction must go beyond disaster response and become part of development planning and local coping strategies. The European Union recognized that the international community was failing to invest enough in disaster preparedness, even though that might be more cost-effective than investing in disaster response. With regard to disaster response, it supported the leading role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) and said that the European Union disaster response mechanism being established would complement the existing United Nations instruments.

19. The response of the United Nations to new security challenges was extremely important for humanitarian action. The European Union welcomed the Organization's work on enhanced security analysis and measures, but took the view that the emphasis should be on risk management rather than risk avoidance, because risk avoidance would reduce the capacity, and thus credibility, of the United Nations. All Member States that had not yet done so should sign the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. They had the obligation to respect, and ensure respect for, international humanitarian law. The European Union believed that the United Nations and Member States must face the challenge of establishing a safe and secure working environment for humanitarian workers. If they failed, the entire humanitarian system might fail. Member States must actively prevent the roles and mandates of humanitarian and military actors from becoming blurred, as a blurring of roles decreased security for humanitarian workers. The concept of integrated missions brought the risk that United Nations humanitarian action would be seen as part of a broader political agenda. Such missions must therefore be organized in such a way as to prevent the independence, impartiality and neutrality of the humanitarian portion of United Nations operations from being misunderstood.

20. The European Union and its member States had been the largest source of humanitarian funding in the world in 2004 and had included humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law in the future European Union Constitutional Treaty. Humanitarian objectives, policies, practices and funding arrangements would continue to converge, driven by the principles of good humanitarian donorship; the European Union therefore attached importance to the forthcoming conference on that subject, to be held in Ottawa. The European Union would do its utmost to make the World Conference on Disaster Reduction a success by promoting a clear link with the Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World

Summit on Sustainable Development and by promoting operational efforts, including new partnerships.

21. With regard to new security challenges, the European Union pledged to uphold and promote the principle of independent and neutral humanitarian action, both within and outside integrated missions, and to support the Organization's own efforts to respond to such threats. The presence of the United Nations was of paramount importance, especially in crisis environments.

22. **Mr. Kitaoka** (Japan) said that local communities' perception and acceptance of humanitarian activities were changing because of the increasing scale of humanitarian assistance and the growing involvement of military forces in relief activities. In order to be accepted by local communities, humanitarian workers should take on a supporting role, because the members of those communities were the key players. Local communities should have ownership of the process of improving living conditions and make full use of their unique social and cultural heritage from the outset, even in a crisis requiring humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian workers could encourage such ownership by respecting local traditions and culture, and engaging in dialogue. Where local NGOs were present, they should be fully involved in assistance activities. Ownership could also be improved by giving a role to regional organizations, as neighbours, and self-reliance could be promoted by empowering the local population from the earliest stages of humanitarian assistance. Japan welcomed the efforts of United Nations development agencies to enter the arena at an early stage instead of waiting until the humanitarian agencies had finished their work, thereby easing the transition from relief to development, and promoting security.

23. While humanitarian workers were reticent about the involvement of the military in humanitarian assistance, the Security Council, in its resolution 1546 (2004), requested the Member States and international and regional organizations to contribute assistance, including military forces, to the multinational force in Iraq. Japan believed that in some cases, the engagement of military forces was vital for the implementation of humanitarian assistance activities. The question of military engagement must be discussed not only from the point of view of its impact on the perceptions of the local population, but also from the point of view of what must be done to deliver assistance to people in need. His delegation supported the United Nations approach, which was to make a case-by-case examination of the impact of military engagement on humanitarian assistance.

24. Japan, a disaster-prone country, had found that damage was mitigated in communities whose members understood, before a disaster occurred, what they could do and how they could help each other. Individuals, not just countries, should have ownership of the situation. Because natural disasters were an obstacle to a country's safety, security and sustainable development, a framework was needed to diminish their impact through preparedness and to respond rapidly when they occurred. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction would provide an opportunity to share knowledge and experience, with emphasis on the role of the community and the need to consider disaster reduction in the context of the development of a country.

25. **Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) said that, as stated by the President of the Russian Federation when he had addressed the General Assembly, the humanitarian activities of the United Nations gave the Organization genuine moral and political authority. That authority had been reinforced by a consistent adherence to the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, as set out by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/182. The Member States should confirm their respect for those principles in the face of the new challenges and threats which the humanitarian community was facing.

26. The international community was increasingly confronted with complex humanitarian situations caused by conflicts, epidemics and natural disasters. Its reaction, which must be comprehensive and coordinated, often went beyond the bounds of emergency operations. To ensure the success of humanitarian efforts and post-conflict peace-building, and to lay the foundations of sustainable development, the transition from emergency assistance to development must be smooth. The United Nations must play a leading role in coordinating international efforts at every stage.

27. The matter of internally displaced persons remained topical, and the Russian Federation continued to believe that such individuals must be given legal protection by national legislation and international human-rights instruments. Assistance must be provided only with the consent of the States of which the

recipients were citizens and with the support of the United Nations.

28. Recent events had shown that humanitarian agencies' neutrality and impartiality no longer protected their workers from attacks, which were often deliberate and well planned. Effective action must be taken, in line with the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. As had been pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2004/74), humanitarian staff should follow agreed security practice on the ground and remain sensitive to local customs and traditions. The Russian Federation advocated in-depth discussion of the effect of a military presence on the way humanitarian activity was perceived.

29. There was a growing demand to ensure disaster-preparedness capability by providing rapid-reaction training for national and international humanitarian agencies. His Government saw an important role for the United Nations in improving international disaster-response capacities; it favoured continued improvement of national early-warning systems and the establishment of a worldwide major disaster information network to coordinate and make the most of national capacities in international rescue efforts.

30. There must be adequate financing of humanitarian assistance: the donor base must be widened and mobilization arrangements improved. The United Nations played a key role through the CAP, but the appeals must be made more flexible to encourage non-traditional donors to become more involved in the international effort. Host Government agreed with the suggestion contained in the report of the Secretary-General that the ceiling for United Nations emergency cash grants to countries affected by natural disasters should be increased to $100,000.

31. **Mr. Frisch** (Observer for Switzerland) said that the report of the Secretary-General had correctly identified the aspects of humanitarian activity which should be improved as a matter of priority, including gender mainstreaming, sensitivity to the recipients' culture and awareness of how they perceived assistance. The conduct of the humanitarian staff on the ground must be faultless and meet the highest ethical standards, as the Secretary-General had emphasized in his bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of 9 October 2003 (ST/SGB/2003/13).

32. His Government believed that international humanitarian and human-rights law and international law on the rights of refugees must be observed scrupulously and under all circumstances so that people in need could be protected and helped effectively. It was important for those involved in providing aid to demonstrate through their actions that such aid reflected values shared by all cultures in all parts of the world, such as compassion and concern for others.

33. United Nations peace and security activities often took place in complex and changing circumstances and civilian activities were more and more frequently supported by armed forces. Military forces could indeed be asked to play a supporting role if civilian resources were unable to cope, but humanitarian organizations nevertheless bore primary responsibility in emergencies. For that reason, his Government would like operational steps to be taken to translate into action the 2003 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies.

34. Inter-agency coordination of humanitarian activities was vital. OCHA played an important role in that regard, particularly through IASC. While Switzerland was in favour of integrated missions, the humanitarian component of such missions must be examined thoroughly case by case and against firm and established humanitarian criteria (humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence). In that connection, humanitarian coordinators on the ground should have direct access to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. In the field of disaster preparedness and response, meanwhile, the primary responsibility lay with national authorities, which should establish a multi-sector strategy combining the efforts of local communities, civil society and non-governmental and international organizations.

35. His Government unconditionally condemned any attack against local or international humanitarian staff and believed that suitable methods of managing security must be discussed comprehensively and in detail. In addition, those guilty of such attacks must be prosecuted under national and international law.

36. **Mr. Strømmen** (Observer for Norway) said that he shared the Secretary-General's concern over the increased targeting of humanitarian personnel in situations of armed conflict. Safe and unimpeded access to vulnerable groups was the key to ensuring effective protection of civilians in armed conflict, and denial of access was unacceptable. All parties to an armed conflict must fully comply with the Geneva Conventions. Increased reliance on armed guards and other protective measures must not be the only means of protecting humanitarian personnel. Such measures might prove counterproductive and create greater distance between humanitarian workers and the civilian population, undermine their legitimacy and local support and thwart effective action on the ground. There was a need to ensure a clear division of labour between political, military and humanitarian actors in conflict areas to avoid compromising security, especially in connection with integrated missions. Policy makers, military commanders and military and civilian personnel should become more aware of the necessity to preserve the integrity of independent humanitarian action based on international humanitarian law.

37. Every effort should be made to avoid misperceptions of humanitarian organizations and their work, as in the case of the integrated mission in Liberia, where the issue deserved careful attention. Moreover, increased efforts were needed to promote the awareness and ownership of humanitarian principles and broaden support for humanitarian action. Initiatives to increase participation and empower affected groups could help local, national and international humanitarian workers to carry out their work. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) laid down principles and guidelines that should also be applied to efforts towards that end.

38. His Government had a longstanding commitment to providing stronger legal protection for United Nations and associated personnel and urged all States that had not yet done so to become parties to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and to implement it fully. However, the protective legal regime for United Nations and associated personnel should be strengthened and the scope of application of the Convention expanded.

39. **Mr. Owuor** (Kenya) said it was disheartening that, although the number of countries requiring humanitarian assistance had remained constant, the pattern of funding humanitarian activities was uneven, leaving some countries underfinanced. His delegation also noted with concern the increased death toll and economic losses in 2003 from natural disasters and environmental emergencies, which underscored the need to invest in national capacities in disaster-prone countries. The increase in the diversity of actors providing humanitarian assistance and the increased engagement of private contractors in the management and distribution of relief assistance were therefore appreciated.

40. The trend towards rejection of humanitarian organizations by belligerent groups was troubling. Of notable concern was the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Iraq in August 2003 as well as the subsequent attack on the International Committee of the Red Cross and humanitarian workers in Afghanistan.

41. Efforts undertaken by various United Nations agencies towards building a strong partnership with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the call for a regional approach to humanitarian crises in the West African region were welcome. His Government supported the call for substantial resources and coordination of the highest quality to ensure that conditions for the reintegration of internally displaced persons and refugees were in place and welcomed the major ongoing repatriation operations in Angola, Eritrea, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, as well as the positive developments in resolving political crises in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia.

42. His delegation abhorred the increasing use of sexual abuse and violence against women and minors and therefore commended the Secretary-General's Bulletin, of 9 October 2003, entitled "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse".

43. In conclusion, his delegation endorsed the recommendation that the ceiling for emergency cash grants for any one disaster should be raised to $100,000 per country, within the existing resources in the regular budget, and supported the ongoing preparation for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

44. **Mr. Onishchenko** (Ukraine), noting with satisfaction that much valuable work had been done to

strengthen the coordination of United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance, largely owing to the expanded activities of OCHA, as well as the efforts that had been made to strengthen the role of IASC, said that his Government was concerned about the alarming spread of HIV/AIDS in humanitarian crises. There was a need to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, to integrate HIV/AIDS considerations into humanitarian programmes and to follow IASC guidelines for HIV/AIDS interventions in emergency settings. National strategies to address the spread of HIV among humanitarian workers and international peacekeepers must also be developed. As a major troop-contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Ukraine had been among the first to incorporate HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention and safe behaviour in pre-deployment training for its peacekeeping units.

45. With respect to the transition from relief to development, there was a need for better alignment between humanitarian assistance and long-term development assistance. The establishment of a standing mechanism comprised of the secretariats of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee for Peace and Security was a welcome response to transition needs. Enhanced cooperation between humanitarian agencies and development institutions was still needed, however, to strengthen transition activities.

46. His Government had experienced a transition from relief to development when mitigating the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and attached particular significance to the role of the United Nations in strengthening the international response to it. The recent transfer of coordination functions for United Nations Chernobyl-related activities from OCHA to the United Nations Development Programme would stimulate resource mobilization and enhance the impact of development and health projects, which his Government urged the donor community to continue to support.

47. **Mr. Zhang** Yishan (China) said that countries with the ability to do so should increase their contributions to humanitarian assistance and reduce the proportion of earmarked funds to ensure that funds were directed where they were most needed. The terrorist attacks and other causes of insecurity that had posed serious threats to the personal safety of humanitarian workers and obstructed the channels for disaster relief were also a matter of concern to his delegation.

48. The United Nations and the international community should abide by the guiding principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality set forth in General Assembly resolution 46/182 and carry out humanitarian action with the consent of the affected countries. His delegation hoped that OCHA would better coordinate the relief work and delivery of materials in affected countries and avoid wasting resources.

49. China had frequently been hit by natural disasters, such as earthquakes and floods, causing heavy economic losses. His delegation expressed its appreciation for the assistance that OCHA had provided in disaster areas in China during the previous year. His Government, in turn, had provided some emergency humanitarian assistance through multilateral and bilateral channels to a number of disaster-stricken developing countries and supported the OCHA initiative to establish a partnership for that purpose. It stood ready to further strengthen its cooperation with OCHA in areas such as natural disaster management and search and rescue.

50. **Mr. Gopinathan** (India) said that humanitarian workers must strictly abide by the basic principles of neutrality, humanity and impartiality. Humanitarian action should be apolitical and offered at the request of the recipient government. It was also important to provide a local face to humanitarian action, which could be accomplished by hiring personnel who lived in close geographical proximity, were familiar with the location and nature of a given crisis and had prior experience with similar emergencies. Procuring resources locally or from neighbouring regions and hiring local transport companies could save resources, promote local capacity-building and reduce delays. Regional approaches to humanitarian assistance might not be useful for all regions or for every situation, however.

51. The United Nations must allocate resources fairly and evenly to countries in need of humanitarian assistance and not be seen as favouring one humanitarian cause over another. Financial assistance provided by the international financial institutions such as the World Bank must not bring with it additional conditionalities or add to the debt burden of the

recipient countries. His Government strongly supported the recommendation contained in the Secretary-General's report (E/2004/74) whereby donor countries would be invited to make available increased amounts of unearmarked, predictable funding for relief assistance.

52. In order to make humanitarian assistance effective, it would be preferable to avoid a multiplicity of actors in disaster management. Coordination efforts should not become the most important function of the humanitarian activities. The role of national Governments and respect for national sovereignty should be stressed.

53. Sharing of technologies such as remote sensing, geographical information systems, global positioning, computer modelling and expert systems and electronic information management would go a long way towards assisting developing countries to be better prepared to deal with natural disasters. His delegation therefore supported the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report to channel increased resources for capacity-building activities to disaster-prone areas and noted with concern the low level of funding by donors for capacity-building in disaster reduction and recovery compared with funding for conflict and post-conflict activities.

54. The Secretary-General's Bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse was commendable. However, his delegation had serious misgivings about the exhortation to incorporate the standards set forth in the Bulletin into domestic legislations and codes of conduct for national armed forces and police and other security forces, matters that fell within the jurisdiction of national Governments. The United Nations must avoid intrusive tendencies, even if the objective seemed desirable, so as to maintain the universal trust of Member States.

55. **Mr. Laurin** (Canada) said that, although the United Nations and other bodies involved in humanitarian action had made substantial progress in addressing many of the serious shortcomings identified by the multinational evaluation of the response to the Rwandan genocide, many of the challenges highlighted in 1994 were still of concern. The international community was still struggling to meet the protection needs of civilians affected by conflict, to develop appropriate responses to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide and to minimize counter-productive donor, agency and affected government behaviour. In addition, there was a need to build the capacity of vulnerable communities, countries and regions in order to mitigate the impact of natural disasters and to respond to the triple threat of HIV/AIDS, food insecurity and weakened capacity for governance. The transition from relief to development must also be managed more effectively. Each of those challenges necessitated significant political engagement, adequate resources and the commitment of all partners to effective cooperation.

56. His delegation shared the Secretary-General's concerns about the obstacles to humanitarian access, the insecurity faced by aid workers and the erosion of humanitarian principles and agreed that the humanitarian community must better communicate its purpose and objectives to local populations and non-State armed actors. Governments must also be more aware of the implications of their decisions to use military forces to carry out humanitarian activities.

57. The Humanitarian Forum held in March 2004 in Geneva had been an important step towards reinvigorating the dialogue among humanitarian actors. Responses to new crises, particularly in the areas of safety and operational planning, should not be entirely shaped by the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. In principle, his delegation supported the concept of integrated missions, which allowed for more coherent and effective responses to crises. However, the successful implementation of such missions required solid collaboration among the political, peacekeeping, humanitarian and development arms of the United Nations under the leadership of the special representatives and the humanitarian/resident coordinators.

58. Member States would also benefit from further dialogue with United Nations humanitarian actors on when integrated missions should be used and from continued guidance on the nature and appropriateness of military involvement in humanitarian operations. In that connection, his delegation called on OCHA to promote the use of the Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief and the IASC reference paper, which provided a practical framework for clarifying ways in which military forces could support humanitarian efforts without undermining respect for humanitarian principles.

59. His delegation was deeply disturbed by the dire impact on humanitarian action of the failure of many States and armed groups to respect international humanitarian law and principles. The international community must be resolute in its response to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, better promote the responsibility of affected States to ensure the protection of civilians and be prepared to take action when such States fail to do so. The tools to address civilian protection issues that had been developed over the past 5 years must be put to better use and, where necessary, new ones should be developed. Impunity must be aggressively combated.

60. Regional organizations could and must play a more active role in promoting the protection of civilians and, to that end, his delegation strongly encouraged the United Nations to enhance its dialogue with them. In parallel, the humanitarian community must build its own capacity to address protection concerns, and therefore IASC should develop appropriate training tools and address the nexus between human rights and humanitarian action in the field. Furthermore, any increased capacity to address civilian protection must incorporate a gender perspective. In that connection, his delegation hoped that the IASC review of its 1999 policy statement on mainstreaming a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance would include concrete measures for action.

61. The provision of timely and flexible resources commensurate with the needs of affected populations remained an elusive goal. However, over the past year, donors had been taking action to follow up the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative and were working to develop a comprehensive definition of humanitarian action for statistical purposes and to harmonize reporting requirements from humanitarian agencies. The agenda of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative was ambitious and would take time to implement. Donors' efforts must be supported by the good receivership of partners from the United Nations system, the Red Cross and the NGO community. Some of the principles of the that agenda could also apply to the transition from relief to development. Donors often undermined their own investments in humanitarian aid by failing to put the countries they assisted on the necessary footing for sustainable development. United Nations agencies had a leadership role to play in helping the international community improve its response to transition situations, particularly in view of the anticipated signing of several new peace agreements.

62. In sum, the overall objective was to ensure that humanitarian action responded effectively to those affected by complex emergencies and natural disasters. Strengthening the coordination of humanitarian aid was an essential element of any timely and effective international response, a necessary means to the ultimate end of protecting the rights and assuring the well-being of those who relied on the international community for aid.

63. **Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga** (Ecuador) said that, according to the World Disasters Report 2003, over the last 10 years, the number of disasters had increased by 62.7 per cent and the number of people affected by those disasters had risen by 54 per cent. A wide range of sources confirmed that climate change was the main reason for the increased frequency of natural disasters and, if the impact of global warming was not aggressively countered with disaster-reduction measures, by 2050 an average of 100,000 people per year would lose their lives. The direct economic consequences would amount to around US$ 300 billion per year.

64. The worsening effects of climate change were accompanied by increasingly vulnerable populations. Poverty had led to greater exposure to risk and created an environment in which natural disasters were causing increasingly serious problems. In those circumstances, disasters had the potential to endanger development and represented a global threat to those living in poverty. In order to address the situation, risk reduction activities must be stepped up in order to prevent or limit the impact of natural disasters and ensure an effective and efficient response to them. In that connection, the 2005 Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction would offer the international community an opportunity to reinforce existing cooperation mechanisms and formulate a specific action plan and an efficient follow-up mechanism in order to attain the objectives established by the General Assembly, particularly those contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The United Nations, under the leadership of OCHA, had an essential role to play in that process.

65. **Mr. Osman** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies(IFRC)) said that, for some years, IFRC had taken the view that the

international community must do more to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. To that end, the third general objective of the Agenda for Humanitarian Action, adopted by the 28th International Conference of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, called on all States to work together in order to minimize the impact of disasters through implementation of disaster-risk-reduction measures and improving preparedness and response mechanisms.

66. The tendency to deal with each problem separately had persisted for too long, but the new processes now in place had done much to promote the realization that only a common approach could successfully meet current humanitarian needs. IFRC welcomed the recognition by the Secretary-General that an understanding of the applicable law was absolutely necessary to the efficient and timely management of disaster situations.

67. The section of the report on natural disasters placed welcome emphasis on building capacities for disaster preparedness and response, including the training of local volunteers. The tragedy in Bam had clearly illustrated the need for such work, which had been crucial in saving the lives of the most vulnerable members of society. However, it had also drawn attention to the fact that, when a disaster captured the attention of the world's media, assistance flowed freely. Governments and organizations must find new ways of identifying resources to cater for the needs of affected populations once media attention dwindled.

68. In recent years, IASC had become increasingly focused on true vulnerability, and his organization was particularly pleased that it had started to contribute significantly to improving the coordination of humanitarian disaster response. IFRC was also a member of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. It felt strongly that disasters broke down communities' and individuals' resilience and coping mechanisms and undermined efforts to reduce poverty and contribute to sustainable development. In that connection, the vital role of disaster risk reduction mechanisms would be addressed by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005.

69. IFRC looked forward to the adoption of a strong and focused resolution on the strengthening of humanitarian assistance and disaster reduction and to working with Member States and international organizations to produce results of real value to those in need.

70. **Mr. Moon** (Republic of Korea) pointed out that, with an estimated 35 million refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide and the all-too-frequent emergence of new conflicts and natural disasters, a continued focus on ways to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance was essential. He stressed the need to develop a framework within which the United Nations could engage with regional bodies on the humanitarian issue on a more systematic basis. Such bodies were uniquely positioned to respond to local crises because they were well informed about conditions on the ground and were, at times, able to respond more promptly and effectively to humanitarian crises than outside actors. Accordingly, he supported the concept of regional partnership proposed by OCHA with a view to facilitating regional cooperation in the field of humanitarian activities among Member States and between Member States and the United Nations system. Furthermore, regional bodies needed to be more involved in humanitarian assistance efforts from the outset, thereby enabling them not only to address the needs of civilian populations but also to provide early warnings about impending crises.

71. In light of the increasing diversity of actors providing humanitarian assistance, greater attention must be given to effective coordination. Moreover, the increased engagement of civil society and the direct involvement of military personnel in relief and reconstruction activities had blurred the traditional distinction between military and civilian roles in complex emergencies, which could have both positive and negative implications. Combining those roles could increase the coherence and effectiveness of humanitarian activities, but might also reinforce misperceptions and jeopardize the appearance of neutrality in the context of humanitarian assistance. Nevertheless, his delegation took the view that combined operations could be effective, particularly when the security situation on the ground prohibited traditional humanitarian groups from delivering assistance. In that connection, further work must be done to better assess the role of military engagement in relief activities and its impact on the perception of humanitarian activities.

72. Since funding for humanitarian operations was dwindling, it was essential to improve their efficacy in order to strengthen the international community's

response to complex emergencies. The Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative provided a good basis for ensuring that humanitarian assistance was provided in accordance with humanitarian principles and that it was backed by a firm financial commitment. Furthermore, to better define humanitarian needs in a transparent and consistent manner, the CAP Needs Assessment Framework and Matrix (NAFM) should be further developed. The Republic of Korea supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that the ceiling for emergency cash grants should be raised from US$ 50,000 to US$ 100,000: those grants played a vital role in enabling disaster-affected countries to purchase relief supplies and equipment while awaiting further support from the international community.

73. In conclusion, he said that coordination at both the field and policy levels was a key factor in ensuring the efficacy of humanitarian assistance. Policy-level coordination included the sharing of information and lessons learned among and between Member States and the United Nations and, in that connection, his delegation was looking forward to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

74. **Mr. Oosthuizen** (Observer for South Africa) expressed his concern that the pattern of funding for humanitarian activities remained uneven. Emergencies that attracted high levels of media attention received more financial assistance than other less high-profile incidents, which contradicted the spirit of various United Nations resolutions calling on the international community to provide assistance in proportion to specific needs and also gave the erroneous impression that funding for humanitarian assistance had increased because of the huge contributions to the highlighted crises. Too often, donors became involved at the height of the crisis only to disengage after the initial concerns were addressed.

75. In that connection, his delegation shared the Secretary-General's concerns about slow-onset disasters, which were of serious concern to Africa as they had a direct impact on food security. The international community as a whole must better address such disasters and their humanitarian impact in a coordinated fashion. His delegation also supported the Secretary-General's recommendation to raise the ceiling for emergency cash grants.

76. The complex issue of the perception and acceptance of humanitarian organizations must be discussed further. Attacks on those organizations, as well as on United Nations personnel, should be condemned and attackers must be brought to justice in accordance with existing judicial principles. Furthermore, the increasing diversity of actors providing humanitarian assistance and the direct involvement of armed forces in relief and construction activities must be better addressed by, inter alia, reviewing and clarifying the guidelines on civil-military relations. In that regard, his delegation supported the efforts of OCHA to ensure that the principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence were respected, particularly in the context of the design and implementation of integrated missions. Improving the communication between humanitarian organizations and local populations regarding the purpose of their activities, as well as increased sensitivity by all personnel to national and local customs and traditions, would greatly facilitate efforts to improve the perception and acceptance of those organizations.

77. His delegation also endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation concerning the integration of a gender perspective into the planning, programming and implementation of humanitarian activities when addressing complex emergencies and the importance of a regional approach, particularly on the African continent. In that connection, the African Union had recently adopted the Protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council, which would, inter alia, address humanitarian assistance and disaster prevention. However, the need for and importance of regional approaches should not be used as an excuse for the discontinuation of international assistance.

78. **Mr. Briz Gutiérrez** (Guatemala) said that the safety of personnel involved in humanitarian and development activities was vital to the success of their work. The change in the way that humanitarian organizations were perceived had been illustrated by an ever-increasing number of attacks against United Nations staff and facilities and, in that connection, the Secretariat's efforts to reduce the risks to which humanitarian workers were exposed, while drawing attention to the need for respect for local traditions and customs, was a welcome development.

79. He underlined the importance of determining the best way to finance humanitarian activities, including those relating to natural disasters. Financing must be

predictable and sufficient to meet needs on the ground. Funds must be distributed equitably and in accordance with humanitarian principles and, once provided, must be managed effectively.

80. The holding of an event on the important issue of the transition from relief to development was particularly timely, since it was precisely through such activities that the Economic and Social Council could contribute to improving the coherence of United Nations activities in the humanitarian, political, human rights and development spheres. In that connection, he shared the Secretary-General's concerns about the potentially negative impact of humanitarian assistance on cooperation for development. A clear distinction must be drawn between emergency assistance and rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance.

81. Strengthening the effective coordination and planning of humanitarian assistance required a genuine commitment to that end from the various actors involved. In that regard, it would be useful to engage in a dialogue on the role of those actors in the humanitarian, political and peacekeeping areas and the complementary nature of their activities.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.